

# Norwalk Police Department partners with local nonprofit for 'No Shave Winter'

**Sarah Kay LeBlanc**, Des Moines Register Published 4:26 p.m. CT Dec. 24, 2019

The Norwalk Police Department is putting its own spin on No Shave November.

In a program the department is calling, Whiskers for Whiskers, officers will refrain from shaving their facial hair until March in support of Whiskers TNR of Warren County.

Chief Greg Staples said eight officers are participating, and each officer chipped in \$100 for the organization. Those officers include two women on the force. In lieu of not shaving, Officer Lilly Dunlop is wearing nonuniform hats, and Kirsten Koestler is dying her hair.

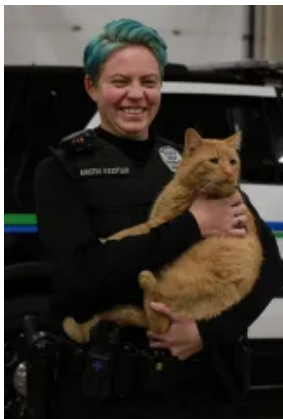
Staples said his goal is to bring awareness to Whiskers and help the organization rescue more cats.

"In a perfect world they can neuter every stray cat so there aren't any more litters of stray kittens running around causing problems or getting sick," he said.

Whiskers TNR — which stands for trap, neuter, return — was formed in 2016 by Corissa Arndt after she noticed a number of stray cats in her Martensdale community.

"I started getting them spayed and neutered, and my husband said, 'You can't just spend all of our money fixing these cats,'" she said.

She and her husband both work, and she wasn't looking to make the nonprofit her full-time job. She just wanted to make it more affordable for people in Warren County, particularly rural areas, to control the stray cat population.



Norwalk police officer Kirstin Koestler stands with a cat who was rescued by Whiskers TNR of Warren County. The police

Each year, the number of cats that Whiskers TNR spays and neuters grows. The nonprofit started with 33 cats in 2016 and increased the number to 97 in 2017 and 147 in 2018. She said 304 cats have been spayed or neutered this year.

To offset the costs, Arndt partners with local vets such as All Creatures Small, Furry Friends and the Iowa Humane Alliance. Whiskers also relies on donations to cover the cost of the surgeries.

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to No Shave November that it  
calls "Whiskers for  
Whiskers." (Photo: Tessa Palmer)

Arndt doesn't reach out to property owners; she lets them reach out to her if they have a large stray cat population. She said she wants to help people who are invested in fixing the problem. If a property owner catches a stray cat in a trap, she'll take care of bringing the cat to a local vet to be spayed or neutered.

"I don't want to do the work for somebody; I want them to help themselves," she said. "They're still going to need to provide food, water and shelter for a community cat."

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She started with a property in New Virginia, where a woman lived on a farm and had just lost her husband. The woman told Arndt she had buried 62 kittens that had been born from stray cats that year.

That made Arndt think of adding fostering to the list of responsibilities that Whiskers TNR has taken on. Now when she takes in cats to spay and neuter from a property, she looks for young or friendly cats who would be a better fit for a home than the outdoors.

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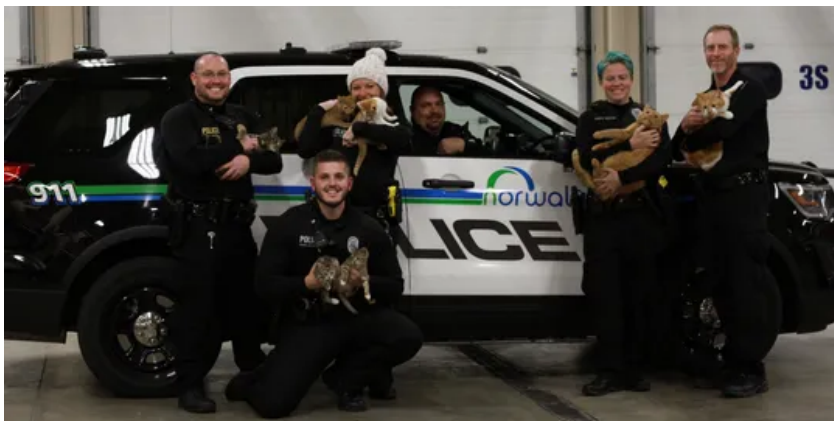
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Whiskers TNR currently has 17 cats and kittens across eight foster homes. This year, 104 cats have been adopted out.

"Unless it's an adoptable young cat, we're probably not going to place it in a foster home. We're going to do trap, neuter, return," she said.

If a cat isn't adoptable, Arndt returns it to the property. Whiskers TNR doesn't have anywhere to keep cats, but is raising money for a building to shelter cats before their spay or neuter surgeries and to treat them for fleas before they go to a foster home.



Norwalk Police officers pose with cats rescued by Whiskers TNR. (From left) Sgt. Trevor Martin, officers Jack Haller, Lilly Dunlop, Brad Criswell, Kirstin Koestler, and chief Greg Staples. (Photo: Tessa Palmer)

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That's where the Norwalk Police Department comes in. Staples met Corissa when the city contacted Whiskers TNR about a colony of cats living behind an apartment complex at the corner of Park Hill and East 17th Street in February 2018. Whiskers trapped 18 cats from the colony with the help of the department and sent them to the Iowa State Feral Cat Alliance.

Staples said the city paid for half of the cost, but wanted to do more to help the organization.

"Whiskers TNR literally solved a public safety problem in Norwalk," he said. "That many cats in that small, confined area was probably not healthy for the cats or the humans."

Those wishing to donate can find collection jars at Norwalk City Hall and the police department. People can also donate on Whiskers' Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/whiskersTNR/>).

*Sarah LeBlanc covers Warren County for the Register. Reach her at 515-284-8161 or [sleblanc@registermedia.com](mailto:sleblanc@registermedia.com). (<mailto:sleblanc@registermedia.com>).*

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